

10/5/2023 Executive Committee Meeting Written Public Comment Submissions

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Jesse Simpson – for Housing Development Consortium of Seattle-King County

Hello,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the disposition of the surplus Columbia City Youth Achievement Center (YAC) Phase 1 Transit Oriented Development (TOD) site, to be considered at Thursday's Executive Committee meeting.

Sound Transit is a leader in advancing equitable transit-oriented development across the region. Thanks to Sound Transit's prioritization of affordable housing on TOD sites, hundreds of affordable homes and community amenities have been developed adjacent to the Roosevelt and Capitol Hill stations, with many more to come. These affordable, transit-oriented homes open up a world of opportunities for low-income people, conveniently connecting them with jobs, services, and amenities found throughout the region.

It is vital that Sound Transit continue your commitment to equitable transit-oriented development by transferring the YAC Phase 1 Property to Africatown Community Land Trust for mixed-use affordable housing, facilitating community-based development in partnership with Community Passageways and Creative Justice. The project will build at least 48 new homes affordable at less than 60% AMI alongside a hub for youth services, with classrooms, study space, dedicated social areas, and more. Given the realities of affordable housing financing, this unique, community-serving development is only possible with the no-cost transfer of land.

We strongly support Motion No. M2023-83 and are grateful for your effective leadership in creating equitable transit-oriented development communities.

Jesse Simpson (*he/him*)

Government Relations and Policy Manager
Housing Development Consortium of Seattle-King County
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Cary Moon

Hello Sound Transit Executive Committee,

I urge you to proceed with the transfer of surplus property at the Columbia City light rail station for the development of housing (Phase I) for the Youth Achievement Center.

This is a great project that emerged authentically from the local community, with essential ongoing involvement and leadership from youth. I feel strongly that the YAC is the best possible use for this surplus land. AfricaTown Community Land Trust, Community Passageways, and Creative Justice are poised to develop this facility and operate the fantastic programs that guide and support young adults

getting their lives back on track. I am volunteering on a committee to help the partners get this project completed, and could not be more excited for it to happen as envisioned.

Please vote yes today and in the full board meeting later this month to transfer the property and empower the CEO to execute the agreements and facilitate the project.

Thank you for your service,
Cary Moon

Comments submitted after the meeting

Stephen Fesler

This comment included a supplemental document which is included at the end of this

Dear boardmembers:

I believe the agency is going the wrong direction on its fare strategy process. Getting the Link fare structure right is critical. Unfortunately, the agency is only testing two approaches: distance-based fares and flat fares. Distance-based fares are fairer but way too complex. Flat fares are simpler but quite regressive and inequitable. Sound Transit should be pursuing zone-based fares which is a middle ground and scalable for regional equity. I have an [article](#) that explains how Sound Transit could do this. Please reconsider the strategy before it's too late.

Kind regards,
Stephen A. Fesler

Betty Lau – Transcript of Verbal Comments

Hi,

Below is the transcript of my verbal comments at today's Executive Committee meeting, for the written record:

Hello, Executive Committee Members!

I'm Betty Lau, co-founder of Transit Equity for All.

Last March 23, the Sound Transit board voted to move forward with 4th Avenue and N&S of CID options; then subsequently voted for preliminary engineering studies for North and South of CID preferred alternatives, while doing nothing for 4th Avenue at Union Station.

We demand an Equity Analysis that includes:

1. A cost benefit analysis of 4th Avenue at Union Station and the N&S of CID alternatives,
2. An analysis of economic impacts to small businesses and non-profits in CID from having and not having light rail access,
3. An analysis of economic benefits of N&S of CID stations to property owners, and
4. The plan to meet federal requirements of providing light rail services to underserved residents and businesses of the CID, including 1200+ limited English and physically challenged senior citizens of color.

Thank you.



HOUSING DEVELOPMENT consortium

October 3, 2023

Councilmember Dawid Constantine, King County Executive
Sound Transit Board Chair
401 S. Jackson St.
Seattle, WA 98104

RE: Motion No. M2023-83 - Property Transfer Agreement with Africatown Community Land Trust for Youth Achievement Center - Phase 1

Dear Sound Transit Executive Committee,

We thank you for the opportunity to comment on the disposition of the surplus Columbia City Youth Achievement Center (YAC) Phase 1 Transit Oriented Development (TOD) site. Sound Transit is a leader in advancing equitable transit-oriented development across the region. Thanks to Sound Transit's prioritization of affordable housing on TOD sites, hundreds of affordable homes and community amenities have been developed adjacent to the Roosevelt and Capitol Hill stations, with many more to come. These affordable, transit-oriented homes open up a world of opportunities for low-income people, conveniently connecting them with jobs, services, and amenities found throughout the region.

It is vital that Sound Transit continue your commitment to equitable transit-oriented development by transferring the YAC Phase 1 Property to Africatown Community Land Trust for mixed-use affordable housing, facilitating community-based development in partnership with Community Passageways and Creative Justice. The project will build at least 48 new homes affordable at less than 60% AMI alongside a hub for youth services, with classrooms, study space, dedicated social areas, and more. Given the realities of affordable housing financing, this unique, community-serving development is only possible with the no-cost transfer of land.

We strongly support Motion No. M2023-83 and are grateful for your effective leadership in creating equitable transit-oriented development opportunities. We look forward to collaborating with you to make progress on the mutually supporting goals of creating equitable communities of opportunity and increasing transit ridership.

Sincerely,

Jesse Simpson
Government Relations and Policy Manager

Sound Transit Weighs Two Link Fare Reforms, But a Third Is Needed

By Stephen Fesler - September 27, 2023



A Link train at Columbia City Station. Rainier Valley riders would see higher fares and bear the brunt of Sound Transit's flat fare proposal. (Ryan Packer)

Fares on Link are poised to increase, but Sound Transit is evaluating two different fare structures. The agency should be considering a third.

Sound Transit is moving forward with alternative changes to Link fares in response to [light rail expansions](#) on the horizon and the fact that agency policy ordinarily would have required a fare increase by now to maintain the 40% farebox recovery target. The agency is considering two very different fare structure approaches, either as flat fares or distance-based fares. Zone-based fares, however, are not under consideration but could be a valuable alternative for most riders.

Regardless of which fare structure Sound Transit chooses, the agency will maintain reduced fare categories for people who are disabled, seniors, or low-income. Youth riders will also continue to ride free.

All scenarios assume some effective fare increase to partially keep up with inflation and reach a particular farebox ratio target, but [agency staff have indicated that the days of 40% farebox recovery are gone](#). Sound Transit boardmembers will eventually have to decide [what the ultimate target will be](#) as part of the fare change process.

What the farebox recovery target is set at will be important because it will drive future fare hike discussions as well.

Status quo distance-based fares

Currently, Sound Transit uses a distance-based fare structure on Link. Regular adult riders are charged a base fare of \$2.25 but because the fare is also distanced-based, an additional \$0.05 is charged per mile rounded up or down to the nearest \$0.25. Thus, a one-mile ride is still \$2.25 whereas a six-mile ride is \$2.50.

As a consequence of the Link system set to grow substantially in the next few years, riders will be able to travel further than ever on light rail. That complicates matters because the distance-based fare matrix will become more complex and top fare prices could grow by more than a dollar. Sticking with the current distance-based fare system could become quite unwieldy for riders to understand and pricier than flat fares for riders going the longest distances.

Under the scenario of retaining distance-based fares, Sound Transit is planning to increase the base fare by \$0.25 or \$0.50 for a regular adult — that's still to be determined. That would translate to a fare structure ranging from \$2.50 to \$4.50 or \$2.75 to \$4.75 once the Lynnwood, Redmond, and Federal Way Link extensions open. These rates could wind up being higher than comparable tram and bus service. Regular adult fares cost \$2.25 on Seattle Streetcar, \$2.75 on King County Metro buses, and \$3.25 on ST Express buses. But unlike Link, those services all use flat fare structures.

Current Link fare table for adult fares

Station	Angle Lake	Airport - SeaTac	Tukwila International Blvd	Rainier Beach	Othello	Columbia City	Mount Baker	Beacon Hill	SODO	Stadium	International District	Pioneer Square	University Street	Westlake	Capitol Hill	University of Washington	U District	Roosevelt	Northgate
Angle Lake		\$ 2.25	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.75	\$ 2.75	\$ 2.75	\$ 3.00	\$ 3.00	\$ 3.00	\$ 3.00	\$ 3.00	\$ 3.00	\$ 3.00	\$ 3.00	\$ 3.25	\$ 3.25	\$ 3.25	\$ 3.25	\$ 3.50
Airport - SeaTac	\$ 2.25		\$ 2.25	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.75	\$ 2.75	\$ 2.75	\$ 2.75	\$ 3.00	\$ 3.00	\$ 3.00	\$ 3.00	\$ 3.00	\$ 3.00	\$ 3.00	\$ 3.25	\$ 3.25	\$ 3.25	\$ 3.50
Tukwila International Blvd	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.25		\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.75	\$ 2.75	\$ 2.75	\$ 2.75	\$ 2.75	\$ 2.75	\$ 3.00	\$ 3.00	\$ 3.00	\$ 3.00	\$ 3.00	\$ 3.25	\$ 3.25	\$ 3.25
Rainier Beach	\$ 2.75	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50		\$ 2.25	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.75	\$ 2.75	\$ 2.75	\$ 2.75	\$ 2.75	\$ 3.00	\$ 3.00
Othello	\$ 2.75	\$ 2.75	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.25		\$ 2.25	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.75	\$ 2.75	\$ 2.75	\$ 2.75	\$ 3.00
Columbia City	\$ 2.75	\$ 2.75	\$ 2.75	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.25		\$ 2.25	\$ 2.25	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.75	\$ 2.75	\$ 2.75	\$ 3.00
Mount Baker	\$ 3.00	\$ 2.75	\$ 2.75	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.25		\$ 2.25	\$ 2.25	\$ 2.25	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.75	\$ 2.75	\$ 2.75
Beacon Hill	\$ 3.00	\$ 2.75	\$ 2.75	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.25	\$ 2.25		\$ 2.25	\$ 2.25	\$ 2.25	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.75	\$ 2.75	\$ 2.75
SODO	\$ 3.00	\$ 3.00	\$ 2.75	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.25	\$ 2.25		\$ 2.25	\$ 2.25	\$ 2.25	\$ 2.25	\$ 2.25	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.75	\$ 2.75
Stadium	\$ 3.00	\$ 3.00	\$ 2.75	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.25	\$ 2.25	\$ 2.25		\$ 2.25	\$ 2.25	\$ 2.25	\$ 2.25	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.75
International District	\$ 3.00	\$ 3.00	\$ 2.75	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.25	\$ 2.25	\$ 2.25	\$ 2.25		\$ 2.25	\$ 2.25	\$ 2.25	\$ 2.25	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.75
Pioneer Square	\$ 3.00	\$ 3.00	\$ 3.00	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.25	\$ 2.25	\$ 2.25	\$ 2.25		\$ 2.25	\$ 2.25	\$ 2.25	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.75
University Street	\$ 3.00	\$ 3.00	\$ 3.00	\$ 2.75	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.25	\$ 2.25	\$ 2.25	\$ 2.25		\$ 2.25	\$ 2.25	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.75
Westlake	\$ 3.00	\$ 3.00	\$ 3.00	\$ 2.75	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.25	\$ 2.25	\$ 2.25	\$ 2.25	\$ 2.25		\$ 2.25	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.75
Capitol Hill	\$ 3.25	\$ 3.00	\$ 3.00	\$ 2.75	\$ 2.75	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.25	\$ 2.25	\$ 2.25	\$ 2.25	\$ 2.25		\$ 2.25	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50
University of Washington	\$ 3.25	\$ 3.25	\$ 3.00	\$ 2.75	\$ 2.75	\$ 2.75	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.25		\$ 2.25	\$ 2.25	\$ 2.50
U District	\$ 3.25	\$ 3.25	\$ 3.25	\$ 2.75	\$ 2.75	\$ 2.75	\$ 2.75	\$ 2.75	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.25		\$ 2.25	\$ 2.50
Roosevelt	\$ 3.25	\$ 3.25	\$ 3.25	\$ 3.00	\$ 2.75	\$ 2.75	\$ 2.75	\$ 2.75	\$ 2.75	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.25	\$ 2.25		\$ 2.25
Northgate	\$ 3.50	\$ 3.50	\$ 3.25	\$ 3.00	\$ 3.00	\$ 3.00	\$ 2.75	\$ 2.75	\$ 2.75	\$ 2.75	\$ 2.75	\$ 2.75	\$ 2.75	\$ 2.75	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.25	

Matrix showing the current Link fare schedule by station pair. (Sound Transit)

- If no changes to current fare structure/levels, fares would range from \$2.25-\$4.25.

Matrix showing the expanded Link fare schedule by station pair when the Lynnwood, Redmond, and Federal Way extensions open. It does not account for added base fare increases that are under consideration. (Sound Transit)

A benefit of distance-based fares, however, is that riders who aren't traveling across most of the Link system would pay lower fares than under a flat fare system.

And that brings us to flat fares. Sound Transit is evaluating a standard adult Link fare that would be either \$3.00, \$3.25, or \$3.50. Those rates could be modestly higher than a distance-based fare system, particularly for the bulk of riders in Seattle. In other words, flat fares would generally be a subsidy benefiting transit riders outside of Seattle.

Something that Sound Transit is not considering is zone-based fares. But many mature transit agencies across the globe use them in rail transit, such as systems in [Vancouver](#), [London](#), and [Zurich](#). A zone-based system offers a balanced approach that

could be more equitable than flat fares but also more simplistic than distanced-based fares. Sound Transit did have a **form of zone-based fares several years ago with ST Express**.



Edited Sound Transit taxing district and subarea map showing where fare zones could be established. (Sound Transit, edits by Stephen Fesler)

A zone-based fare system could essentially mimic the Sound Transit taxing district subareas, except with two zones in the North King County Subarea. Riders traveling within one zone or two zones could be charged the lowest fare. Riders traveling within more than two zones would pay incrementally higher fares.

In terms for fares, the following table offers a potential fare structure for this zone-based system:

Zones	A	B	C	D	E	F
A	\$2.75	\$2.75	\$3.50	\$4.75	\$4.75	\$6.75
B	\$2.75	\$2.75	\$2.75	\$3.50	\$3.50	\$4.75
C	\$3.50	\$2.75	\$2.75	\$2.75	\$2.75	\$3.50
D	\$4.75	\$3.50	\$2.75	\$2.75	\$3.50	\$4.75
E	\$4.75	\$3.50	\$2.75	\$3.50	\$2.75	\$2.75
F	\$6.75	\$4.75	\$3.50	\$4.75	\$2.75	\$2.75

This structure would favor short- and medium-distance trips over longer ones, by keeping fares lower for most trip pairs and charging higher fares for the longest trips. This approach offers a more regionally equitable structure while keeping fare matrices relatively simple. This type of simple fare structure could also fit relatively neatly into fare-capping.

While Sound Transit is not considering zone-based fares, the agency is running an [online open house through October 22](#). Riders can provide feedback on the distance-based and flat fare alternatives as well as comments asking for consideration of a more regionally equitable zone-based system.

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Stephen is a professional urban planner in Puget Sound with a passion for sustainable, livable, and diverse cities. He is especially interested in how policies, regulations, and programs can promote positive outcomes for communities. With stints in great cities like Bellingham and Cork, Stephen currently lives in Seattle. He primarily covers land use and transportation issues and has been with The Urbanist since 2014.

